

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

By ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE.

"UNCLE TOM, SEVENTY YEARS AFTER" was the title of an article in a recent issue of the book section discussing the problem of the American negro of to-day as it is reflected in fiction, and particularly emphasizing Mr. Stribling's "Birthright" and Mr. Shand's "White and Black." The Abolitionists of the fifties foresaw the end of all civic ills with the emancipation of the slaves. They pictured a millennium and probably honestly believed in the vision. Yet after nearly sixty years, during which the negro has enjoyed the priceless boon of liberty—if it be not treason to use that word—the full solution of the problem has certainly not been found. Novels are not needed to prove that. The lynchings and burnings of which the newspapers inform us every other day are not such an improvement on the whip wielded by Simon Legree. Cissie Dildine of "Birthright," for example, has her troubles, just as Eliza of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had her troubles. But there is one aspect of the matter in which the world has changed. Books like "Birthright" and "White and Black" provoke discussion; they do not inflame the passions as did Mrs. Stowe's book seventy years ago.

JUST seventy years ago "Uncle Tom's Cabin" appeared in book form. It was already famous, for it had been published serially in the *National Era*. The *National Era* had been established in Washington in 1847. Its editor was Dr. Gamaliel Bailey, a prominent Abolitionist. The *Era* became the recognized organ of the anti-slavery party in the national capital. Several times the paper passed through the ordeal of mob violence. Dr. Bailey wrote to Mrs. Stowe, asking her to write a story for the paper which should aim to further the cause with which they both were so much in sympathy. The result was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which began in 1851. It was originally intended by Mrs. Stowe that the story should run through three or four numbers; instead it ran through about fifty. Then, as a book, it was brought out in 1852 by a Boston publishing house. The tale carried the question of slavery into the very homes of the people, rousing those in the North to indignation and stirring the South to resentment. According to geography, it was a "triumph of reality," or a "monstrous distortion," inspired by Abolitionist fanaticism and designed to excite sectional discord.

AT the age of twenty Harriet Beecher Stowe went to live in Cincinnati, with a slave State just across the river. Frequently visiting Kentucky, she saw negro slavery, in the mild and patriarchal form depicted in the opening chapters of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." From her brother Charles, who was employed as a clerk in a wholesale commission house that did business with the Red River cotton plantations, she obtained the character of Simon Legree. On a Mississippi steamboat going from New Orleans to St. Louis Charles Beecher actually witnessed the scene where the Legree of real life showed his fist and boasted that it was "hard as iron knocking down niggers, and that he didn't bother with sick niggers, but worked his in with the crop." The original of the "little Harry" of the story was the son of a young woman servant in the Stowe Cincinnati household. The woman, an escaped slave, fearing recapture by her master, was spirited away, with her boy, by Prof. Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher, who was then a student in Lane Seminary, to a lonely farmhouse, which was one of the stations of the underground railway which served to convey fugitives from the South to the Canadian border.

"UNCLE TOM'S CABIN" was written mostly in Brunswick, Me. Some of the chapters were written in Boston and part of the concluding chapter in Andover.

In an "Introduction" to the novel written late in life Mrs. Stowe referred to the incident of Eliza's flight over the ice as the "first salient point" in the story. She also referred to the incident as though she had learned of it for the first time in the pages of an anti-slavery magazine. As a matter of fact, it was an actual happening during her residence in Ohio. She had known and had often talked with the very man who helped Eliza up the bank of the river. That was years before she thought of writing the book. Finally, at the suggestion of her husband, who had found scribbled on bits of brown paper the beginning of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and had been deeply affected by it, she determined to write a serial story, the climax of which was to be the death of Uncle Tom.

PERHAPS the strangest of all contemporary reviews of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was that published by the *Liberator* of Boston, professedly the organ of the New England Abolitionists. In its columns its editor, William Lloyd Garrison, had been thundering out his weekly diatribe against the slaveholding States. A great part of the paper was given over to clippings inimical to the South, designed to rouse Northern indignation and to inflame Southern resentment. Yet in the *Liberator* the review of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which appeared in an issue in the spring of 1852, just before the appearance of the story in book form, was not only unenthusiastic; it was actually unsympathetic. Mrs. Stowe and her book were damned with faint praise and roundly scored for what the reviewer called "her objectionable sentiments respecting African colonization." Is it possible that professional jealousy existed between the *Liberator* and the *National Era*?

BUT apart from the *Liberator*, Boston naturally indorsed. The *Morning Post*, for example, said: "Since 'Jane Eyre' no book has had so sudden and so great a success on this side of the Atlantic as 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Everybody has read it, is reading it or is about to read it, and certainly it is one of the most remarkable literary productions of the time, an evident result of some of the highest attributes of the novel writer. . . . As all the world knows, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' purports to be a picture of slavery. . . . The incidents are stated to be drawn from the personal experiences of the writer or her most immediate friends, and we believe it is universally admitted that as a mere story the book is of intense interest. . . . But brilliant as 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' is as a literary work it is yet more creditable to the author in another point of view. It appears that, unlike most women and very many men, Mrs. Stowe has the high ability of looking on both sides of one question. With feelings and principles equally opposed to slavery for its inevitable evils as well as its accidental abuses, she is yet able to paint the slaveholder as he lives and moves with no touch of bigotry or fanaticism."

THAT is a sample of the New England attitude toward "Uncle Tom's Cabin." New York in the fifties was neither violently pro nor anti-slavery. The *Evening Post* of June 16, 1852, in an editorial entitled: "We Must Judge by What We Are Compelled to See," said in part: "The *Southern Press* of yesterday, which we remark is principally filled with extracts from the Boston Commonwealth in denunciation of slavery, and thus makes itself an accomplice in the circulation of abolition sentiments in the South, complains, in a notice of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' that the work is a caricature of slavery. 'It selects,' says the *Southern Press*, 'the most odious features of slavery, the escape and pursuit of fugitive slaves, the sale and separation of

domestic slaves,' &c. We might say on behalf of the book, to which the *Southern Press* devotes its leading article, a column in length, that it is a mistake to affirm that the worst features of slavery only are selected in the portraiture given by the author. On the contrary, she sets before her readers a picture, honorable not to the institution but to many who live under it, of a planter's family, the slaves of which are treated with exemplary kindness and unvarying humanity, a kindness not merely good natured and well meaning but judicious and painstaking."

BUT of course for the really vitriolic reviews it is necessary to turn to the newspapers and magazines of the South of the period. There is a wide choice. The *Weekly Picayune* of New Orleans expressed itself when it was proposed to dramatize "Uncle Tom's Cabin": "The gross misrepresentations of the South which have been propagated through the press with the laudation of editors, politicians and pious fanatics of the pulpit, are to be presented in tableaux and the lies they contain acted before crowds of deluded spectators. The stage is to be employed in depicting to the people of the North the whole body of the people of the South as living in a state of profligacy, cruelty and crime, tyrants who fear not God and cruelly oppress their fellow creatures. . . . It is deplorable that a woman should be the chief instrument in this labor of mischief. We know nothing of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe except her book, but there is enough in that to give her an odious notoriety. She has too much mind not to comprehend the wicked injustice and dangerous consequences of the distorted picture she has drawn of slave life and Southern morals. She knows that a picture of Northern society, in which the Polly Bodines, the Ann Hoags and John W. Websters portrayed as true representatives of the principles and habits of New York or Massachusetts would be as correct in material facts as her story of planting life in the South."

SOON after the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" there appeared a book entitled "The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin." That was the work that stirred the particular ire of the *Southern Messenger* of Richmond, probably the leading literary review of the South. "A propos of 'The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin' Mrs. Stowe protrudes herself again upon our notice, and though we have no predilections for the disgusting office of castigating such offenses as hers and rebuking the incendiary publications of a woman, yet the character of the present attack and the bad emanations which she and her books have both won render a prompt notice of the present encyclopedia of slander even more necessary than any reply to her previous fiction. Her second appearance on the stage of civil dissension and social polemics is much changed from what it was at the time when her first revelations were given to the world. She was then an obscure Yankee school-mistress, eaten up with fanaticism, festering with the malignant virus of abolitionism, self-sanctified by the virtues of a Pharisaic religion devoted to the assertion of women's rights, and an enthusiastic believer in many neoteric heresies, but she was comparatively harmless as being almost entirely unknown. She has now by a rapid ascent and by a single dash risen to unequalled celebrity and notoriety, and at the present moment she can give currency to her treacherous doctrines and her big budget of scandal by the prestige of unprecedented success."

CONTINUING in this vein the *Southern Messenger* went on: "It is a horrible thought that a woman should write or a lady read such productions as those by which a celebrity has been acquired. Are scenes of license and impurity, and ideas of loathsome depravity and habitual prostitution to be made the cherished topic of the female pen, and the familiar staple of domestic conversation? Is the mind of woman to be tainted, seduced, contaminated, and her heart disenchanted of its native purity of sentiment by the unblushing

perusal, the free discussion and the frequent imitation of such thinly veiled pictures of corruption? Can a lady of stainless mind read such works without a blush of confusion, or a man think of their being read by ladies without shame and repugnance? It is sufficiently disgraceful that a woman should be the instrument of disseminating the vile stream of contagion, but it is intolerable that Southern women should defile themselves by bringing the putrid waters to their lips. If they will drink of them in secret, let them repent in secret, and not make vices unknown to the ears of the pure and upright of their sex the subject of daily thought and conversation."

BUT the abuse of the Southern papers served only to swell the tide. Very soon after its appearance in this country it had taken England by storm and had been translated all over Europe. In French it became "Le Case de l'Oncle Tom"; in Germany, "Onkel Tom's Hütte"; in Denmark, "Onkel Tomas"; in Holland, "De Negerhut"; in Flemish Belgium, "De hut van Onkel Tom"; in Hungary, "Tama's Batya"; in Italy, "La Capanna dello Zio Toma"; in Poland, "Chata Wujka Tomazza"; in Portugal, "A Cabana do Paj Thomas"; in Spain, "La Cabana del Tio Tom"; in Russia, "Khizhina dyadi Toma"; in Sweden, "Onkel Tom's Stuga." Thirty years later, at a garden party given in honor of Mrs. Stowe to commemorate her seventieth birthday, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes referred to these editions of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in the following lines:

If every tongue that speaks her praise,
For whom I shape my tinkling phrase,
Were summoned to the table,
The vocal chorus that would meet.
Of mingled accents harsh or sweet,
From every land and tribe, would beat
The polyglots of Babel.

Briton and Frenchman, Swede and Dane,
Turk, Spaniard, Tartar of Ukraine,
Hidalgo, Cossack, Cadl,
High Dutchman and Low Dutchman,
too,
The Russian serf, the Polish Jew,
Arab, Armenian and Manchoo
Would shout: "We know the lady!"

SOME weeks ago, apropos of the publication in this country of the new Byron letters, there was a discussion in this department of the book section of Mrs. Stowe's intrusion—no other word exactly fits the case—upon the Byron scandal. The authors of "Harriet Beecher Stowe; the Story of Her Life," have this to say about the matter: "She was urged not to do it; even her own husband pleaded with her and begged her to stay her hand. Her son Charles joined his father in urging her not to publish the article after she had read it to him at a quiet seaside resort during the summer of 1869. But she set her face as a flint, and to every objection she said in substance: 'My friend Lady Byron is vilified, disgraced and covered with infamy by the hand of Lord Byron's mistress! I know the truth in all this horrid business! I am the one who can speak the truth that shall set her right before the world! If others who could speak would speak and clear her name of these vile slanders then I could be silent. I could never respect myself nor have one moment's peace did I keep silence at this time. I cannot, and I will not, sit calmly by and see my friend insulted, outraged and her fair name trampled in the dust while I have it in my power to defend her!'"

Authors' Works And Their Ways

As an indication of what the Australian public reads, the Harpers offer the information that they have received large orders for the following books: "Coomer Ali," by S. B. H. Hurst; "The Vertical City," by Fannie Hurst; "The Pathless Trail," by Arthur O. Friel; "Lost Valley," by Katharine Fullerton Gerould and Zane Grey's "To the Last Man."

Drevels Jonkers of Amsterdam, the original of William McFee's Tommy in "Casuals of the Sea," has set sail on a new adventure, this time on dry land, Tommy is a true

seaman who never in his twenty-six years has been more than five miles from the ocean. The nephew of a quartermaster in the Dutch Navy and the son of a sailor, Tommy sailed as messroom boy on the British tramp, Queen Eleanor, bound for Vladivostok when he was only 13 and stayed at sea until a year ago.

"Broken Stowage," reviewed in this section of the book section, is by David W. Bone, the author of "The Brassboulder." The title "Broken Stowage" is taken from the seaman's term for the small packages which are used to fill up the odd corners of the cargo of a seagoing ship—and is indicative of the humor and pathos, the good and bad fortune, and the varied experiences on sea and in port, which have gone in to the making of the book.

The recent address of Sir James M. Barrie on the occasion of his installation as rector of Saint Andrews University, which struck a responsive note throughout all Britain, and even appeared in full in the American press, is already in process of publication by Charles Scribner's Sons. It will appear under the title "Courage."

John D. Quackenbos, M. D., professor emeritus of Columbia University, in a recent lecture in New York city, discussed the subject of immortality from three points of view—the Thomas Edison theory of electron; the Conan Doyle theory of conversation with the dead and his own theory which he has outlined from psychologic angle in his book, "Body and Spirit" (Harpers). "The proof of immortality is not to be sought for in the vaporings of spiritism," he writes. "The gold of its fact is concentrated in a vein of supersensible realities which render it not only possible but certain. . . . The writer has never heard a spiritistic medium say anything that was not readily comprehensible on the theory of thought transference. He has never seen a medium do anything that could not be rationally explained as due to the action of that supersensible psychic force so fully described in the foregoing chapters. This force he believes to inhere in every human personality, but only a few human beings have power consciously or unconsciously to exploit it in their earth lives, or make it visible and tangible in the so-called phenomena of the seance."

Houghton Mifflin Company are planning to bring out in the near future a complete sixteen volume edition of Lafcadio Hearn's works. The first edition will be limited to 750 copies, each set being autographed by Madam Hearn. There will be 125 full page illustrations, many of them taken especially by Burton Holmes, who is now engaged in this work in Japan.

The Oxford University Press American Branch is about to publish "The Government of India," a brief historical survey of Parliamentary legislation relating to India, by Sir Courtenay Ilbert, K. C. B., K. C. S. I., sometime clerk of the House of Commons and Law Member of the Council of the Governor-General of India.

William Dana Orcutt, whose novel, "The Balance," was recently reviewed in the book section, is professionally a typographic expert of international reputation. The "Humanistic" type, designed by him while studying in Florence, based upon the wonderful hand lettering of the humanistic scribes of the fifteenth century, has just been recut in Italy to be used in producing the great edition of Dante's "Divine Comedy," being issued in commemoration of the six-centennial of the poet. Mr. Orcutt is also the author of "The Writer's Desk Book," a complete manual of information on technical form in writing.

It is said in Berlin that Karl Rosner, the war correspondent of the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*, wrote a large part of the memoirs of the ex-Crown Prince, recently reviewed in the book section.

Pierre Loving's one act play in verse, "The Stick-up," recently pro-

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